

May 17, 2020 - Easter 6

Parts of this service marked with an asterisk () may be led by one person.*

Invocation

* Doing the loving thing is not always easy.

The first disciples struggled with it. So do we.

But even when it is difficult, we remember Jesus' undying love for us.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn *(Read or sung together)*

(Hymn lyrics printed under OneLicence # 11411292)

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. The cross stands empty to the sky.

Let streets and homes with praises ring. Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now, and touching every place and time.

In ev'ry insult, rift and war, where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more, and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth, can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth, revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring with joy, with justice, love and praise.

For those of you reading this on line, a slightly modified version of this hymn may be heard by clicking here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fD8pxDgTZZU>

Prayer of the Day *(Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress)*

* Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Scripture Reading

* A reading from the First Letter of Peter

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if

suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Reflection

* When the State of Emergency was declared in Nova Scotia, our local grocery store made internet shopping available. We can place our order using our computer; they tell us when the order will be ready; we go to the back door of the store and pick up our groceries.

This was put in place, not just to protect shoppers (you and me), but just as much to protect the grocery store employees. By using this method, we do not interact with store employees, or pass other shoppers in the aisles, or jam through the check-out lines, or make contact with check-out people. Even though it is not quite as convenient as what we were used to doing, this way we are protecting each other. We are caring for each other. We are loving each other.

When this practice first started up, it was several days (almost a week, in fact) between the time when we sent in our order, and when we were finally able to pick up our groceries. We needed to plan ahead!

But it's different now.

We can still order through our computer. We still avoid contact with folks, and so we continue to look after each other's health.

But now, we can make our order in the morning, and pick it up later the same day. The last time Deb made a pick up, she asked one employee about this, because we wondered if they were just getting that much more efficient in filling the orders.

"No," she was told. "People aren't sending their orders anymore. They are just coming to the store like they always did."

Don't get me wrong. I understand the desire to get out of the house. I understand the desire to interact with people again. I understand the desire to "get back to normal."

But until Public Health officials say that "social distancing" no longer needs to be practiced, I suggest that doing the loving thing for our neighbours who work in the grocery store involves ordering through the internet if possible.

I think this is the perspective that Peter is encouraging in the reading above. He points us to doing the right thing, "...who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good?". He acknowledges that it might feel that we are the only ones doing it sometimes, "Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated...."

But he also reminds us, even when things get difficult, or uncomfortable, or even nasty (as we have seen in some of the news stories lately about protestors who want their "normal life" back, no matter what it costs anyone else), that God goes with us into those hard places, "if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed."

In these days of fear and uncertainty, when feelings are raw and even next week seems like a lifetime away, the most clearly "Christian" thing we can do is act out of love. The clearest witness we can give to "the hope that is in us," is to do what we can for the people around us, with all the "gentleness and reverence" we can muster.

Including grocery store employees.

Because they need to hear, and experience, as much as anybody, that Christ is risen.
Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!
Amen.

Offerings

Please take a moment to support our parish with your financial gifts. Expenses continue, as you know, even in the middle of this pandemic shut-down. Your consistent support is crucial to maintaining the ministry of this parish.

You can do this several ways:

- *All of our churches will receive offerings via mail.*
- *You can make an on-line donation through the ELCIC website, secure.elcic.ca. Include the name of your congregation and its location in the “Personal Message” box.*
- *Zion in Lunenburg can receive on-line donations through www.canadahelps.org.*
- *Both Grace and Zion have installed a secure mail slot/box on the front of their buildings, in which your offering envelopes may be placed whenever convenient.*

Thank you for your on-going support in these challenging times.

Prayers of the People

* Celebrating the victory of love over death, we offer our prayers to God.

[Short pause]

God who is love, your love fills our universe, and spills into our lives. We give thanks for this amazing gift. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who is love, your love spill over us and into your creation. We give thanks that we can be part of your loving action in this world. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who is love, your love comes even in the middle of our selfishness, our fear, our isolation, and our misguided attempts to re-establish “normal.” We give thanks that we are not alone. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who is love, you have called your church to be a community of love. Remind us of our connection to each other in this time of pandemic, that we may support each other and share your presence in our community. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who is love, we offer our love for those who have lost health, who have lost hope, who have lost themselves in these trying times.

[Names of those who are of special concern may be offered.]

Use us to touch hurting people with your healing presence. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who is love, as we suffer through these times, assure us that you suffer with us, that we, and the whole world, may know your love. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

We pray this in the name of our risen and living Saviour, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray,
Our Father....

Lord's Prayer *(Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress)*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

OR

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

OR

To pray with the leaders of our local congregations, you may click here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D7r99aSnzg>

Hymn *(Read or sung together)*

(Hymn lyrics printed under OneLicence # 11411292)

Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known,
join in a song with sweet accord, join in a song with sweet accord
and thus surround the throne, and thus surround the throne.

Chorus

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
we're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God;
but children of the heavenly king, but children of the heavenly king
may tell their joy abroad, may tell their joy abroad. *Chorus*

The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets
before we reach the heav'nly fields, before we reach the heav'nly fields,
or walk the golden streets, or walk the golden streets. *Chorus*

Then let our songs abound, and every tear be dry;
we're marching through Immanuel's ground, we're marching through Immanuel's ground
to fairer worlds on high, to fairer worlds on high. *Chorus*

For those of you reading this on line, this hymn may be heard by clicking here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmbqN0yiT4I>

Benediction (*Read together*)

May almighty God,
The Father who created us to live in love,
The Son (†) who died and rose to bring us new life,
And the Spirit who does the loving thing in us,
bless us all, now and forever. Amen.

Go in peace, caring for the world.
Thanks be to God!
For Christ is risen!
Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!